

Nansemond I (SwStr)

(SwStr: t. 340; l. 146-; b. 26-; dr. 8-3-; dph. 9-6-; s. 15 k.; cpl. 63; a. 1 30-pdr. p.r., 2 24-pdrs.)

A county and a river in southeastern Virginia.

I

The first *Nansemond*, a side wheel steamer built at Williamsburg, N.Y. in 1862, as *James F. Freeborn*, was purchased by the Navy at New York City 18 August 1863 from Richard Squires; renamed *Nansemond* and commissioned at Baltimore 19 August, Lt. Roswell H. Lamson in command.

After joining the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron off Wilmington 24 August 1863, the side wheeler chased blockade running steamer *Douro* ashore near New Inlet, N.C., 11 October, and destroyed her and her cargo of cotton, tobacco, turpentine, and rosin. *Quaker City* had previously captured the steamer, but, after being condemned and sold, *Douro* had reverted to running confederate contraband. However, after her encounter with *Nansemond*, *Douro* was "...a perfect wreck...and past ever being bought and sold again." Squadron Commander Rear Admiral S. P. Lee reported, "*Nansemond* has done well off Wilmington. She discovered followed and destroyed (sic.) the *Douro* at night, the first instance of the kind, I believe." Ten days later four shots from *Nansemond* caused blockade running steamer *Venus* to take on water, forcing her ashore near the mouth of the Cape Fear River. After vainly trying to refloat her the next morning, Lt. Lamson set fire to the hulk.

On the evening of 4 November, *Howquah* sighted blockade runner *Margaret and Jessie* and pursued her through the night. The next morning, *Nansemond* and Army transport *Fulton*, which had joined in the chase, captured the notorious runner at sea, east of Myrtle Beach, S.C. *Margaret and Jessie* had previously succeeded in running the blockade 15 times.

On the evening of 6 May 1864, C.S.S. *Raleigh* steamed over the bar at New Inlet and attacked blockaders *Britannia* and *Nansemond* while a Confederate steamer raced to sea. The following morning, *Nansemond*, *Howquah*, *Mount Vernon*, and *Kansas* repulsed a renewed attack by the Southern ram. *Raleigh*, while attempting to withdraw over the bar at the mouth of Cape Fear River, grounded, suffered severe damage and was destroyed by her Commander, Flag Officer William F. Lynch, to prevent her falling into Union hands.

On 20 June *Nansemond* and *Calypso* embarked Army troops for an expedition to New River, N.C. to cut the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. However, word of the raid reached Confederate ears, and strong Southern defensive forces compelled the Union troops to withdraw under cover of the ships' guns.

The Union was determined, however, to have Wilmington. A joint Army-Navy attack on Fort Fisher, which protected the vital Southern port, was launched on Christmas Eve, only to be repulsed the next day by determined defenders. The Union struck again 13 January 1865 and finally conquered the bitterly contested Confederate stronghold three days later.

After supporting the Union's final drive on Richmond, *Nansemond* decommissioned at Washington Navy Yard 8 August 1865. She was transferred to the Treasury Department 22 August and served the Revenue Cutter Service as *W. H. Crawford*, operating primarily along the Atlantic coast from Baltimore to Key West. She was sold at Baltimore to Edward D. Booz 24 April 1897.